

7 April 1993

PRESS RELEASE

Mubarak's Egypt

During his recent visit to the UK, President Hosni Mubarak gave an interview to The Times which was published on 2 April. As several of the claims made by Mubarak were far from true, Mr Salem Azzam, Secretary General of the London-based Islamic Council wrote a letter of rebuttal to The Times which was published today, 7 April. The letter, as published by The Times, is reproduced below:

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*From the Secretary General of
the Islamic Council*

Sir, The interview which President Mubarak of Egypt gave to your Foreign Editor (April 2) should not be allowed to pass without comment or without your readers being offered an alternative exposition of what is happening in Egypt.

President Mubarak's adherence to the law and his attempts to teach the people that democracy and the rule of law are stronger than dictatorship sound laudable but, sadly, the truth is very different.

Since taking office in 1981, President Mubarak has not ruled for one single day without recourse to emergency laws. Tens of thousands have been arrested, many held without trial, incommunicado, without access to lawyers, family or medical treatment.

In many cases, if the accused have been brought to trial, if acquitted by the courts they have been routinely rearrested by the security forces. Torture is common. All this is well documented by, for example, Amnesty International, one of whose reports (October 1991) is entitled *Egypt: Ten Years of Torture*.

To understand what is happening in Egypt today the question that must be asked is who started the campaign

of violence? Who is responsible for oppression of the people, for arbitrary arrests of those whose only "crime" is to have the courage to speak their minds against unpopular government policies and to stand up for their basic human rights?

Recently, a mosque in Aswan was surrounded by police who opened fire on innocent worshippers killing at least 14 and wounding many others. There are many such happenings. For President Mubarak to compare the current situation in Egypt favourably to that in Britain is an insult to Britain.

It is also astonishing that the president had not heard of Sheikh Abdel Rahman "until I saw him on CNN". He was a defendant (acquitted, incidentally, and subsequently routinely rearrested — the reason he left Egypt) in the most important trial to take place in modern Egypt and featured daily on the front pages of all Egypt's newspapers.

President Mubarak states that his government is strong, a cornerstone in the area and has the support of the whole country. In which case why his resort to emergency laws, special and military courts and arbitrary arrests?

Yours faithfully,
SALEM AZZAM,
Secretary General,
Islamic Council,
16 Grosvenor Crescent, SW1.
April 2.